

The Henry Osborn House
506 Stuyvesant Avenue
Irvington, Essex County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-618

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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506 Stuyvesant Avenue
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Owner: Clara Frebel

Date of Erection: Circa 1806 (front remodelled
circa 1843)

Architect:

Builder: Henry Osborn Sr., alterations by
Thomas Belcher 1843

Present Condition: Moved from original site in
or after 1919

Number of Stories: One and one-half, and cellar

Materials of Construction: Foundation - cement block,
not original

Exterior walls - timber
frame clapboarded

Interior walls - lath and
plaster on studding

Chimneys - brick built
into inside of gable end
walls

Roof - gable wood shingled
overlaid with modern
asphalt roofing

Historical Data:

The town of Irvington in which is situated
this house was named for Washington Irving in 1852.
Formerly called Camptown for the family of Camp,

early settlers there, it was a hamlet at the junction of the present Clinton and Springfield Avenues. It lies west of the city of Newark and east of South Orange.

(quote) Thomas Hayes resided on the northwest corner of Irvington Avenue and Wall Street. Tradition hath it that during the Revolutionary War he was murdered in his barnyard by a negro.....Subsequently, Elias Osborn and Henry Osborn owned and occupied the place, one residing on the west of Wall Street and the other between Wall Street and Elizabeth River, both houses being still standing.(a) This Thomas Hayes of Newark Township, Essex County, in his will of 29 May 1777, proved 16 August 1777, devised to his wife Sarah the use of his whole estate for the support of herself and children, Hannah, Elizabeth, and John, all then minors, until the son became of age 21 years, and ordered "my upper tract of land, bounded by Joseph Ball's land and that of my brother Daniel Hayes", to be sold.(b)

In verification of the statement quoted above reference to the land records of Essex County shows that by 21 October 1806 Henry Osborn Sr. of Newark Township (of which Irvington was then a part) was in possession of the $5\frac{1}{2}$ acre tract which extended eastward from Wall Street to Elizabeth River along the north side of Clinton Avenue.(c) On this tract was erected the house here considered facing that Avenue. On the same date, Elias Osborn Jr. of the same township owned a $5\frac{1}{4}$ acre lot next above that one,

(a) History of Essex and Hudson Counties, New Jersey Wm. H. Shaw, publ. Phila. 1884, 2 vols. page 695, Clinton Township, Essex County

(b) N. J. Archives, vol. 34, p. 236; abstracts of Wills 1771-1780

(c) Essex County Mortgage Book H, pp. 22 and 23

fronting on Wall Street, and the 11.61 acre tract opposite both, at the northwest corner of Clinton Avenue and Wall Street, with other lots adjacent at that crossroad. No deeds by which these parties acquired this property are of record in the county archives in Newark which begin about 1795, but it appears possible that it came to them through their marriage with the daughters of Thomas Hayes.

This Elias Osborn Junior born 15 July 1754, died 3 May 1828, (d) having served as a private soldier in the New Jersey Militia in the Revolution. He married firstly Hannah Hayes, a daughter of the Thomas Hayes (first mentioned above as owner of the tract on part of which this house was erected), and secondly (by 1823) Nancy Crowell, widow of Moses Crowell of Newark. (e) He was evidently the son Elias named first of eleven children in the will of Elias Osborn Senior, of Elizabeth Town, 20 February 1806, who died 30 October 1807 aged 84 years and, like the former, was buried in Connecticut Farms Churchyard. (d) A son Henry Osborn is named second in the eleven, from which fact it is apparent that these two owners of parts of the Hayes farm in Irvington in 1806 as above-said were brothers, Elias Osborn Junior and Henry Osborn Senior.

This Henry Osborn, of Orange Township, conveyed the $5\frac{1}{2}$ acre lot at the northeast corner of Clinton Avenue and Wall Street with the house (also an $11\frac{1}{4}$ acre one next west of Elias Osborn's corner lot and one of 3.4 acres across Clinton Avenue from the first) by deed of 15 March 1825 to John S. Osborn, possibly his son, for \$1400. Henry Osborn, the grantor died 15 October 1835 in his 76th year, his wife Elizabeth

(d) Inscriptions from Conn. Farms Cem., publ. in Proc. N. J. Hist. Soc., new series, vol. 10, p. 59

(e) D.A.R. Lineage Book 45, p. 253; Essex Co. Deed Book 0-2, p. 34

having died 13 April 1815 in her 49th.(d) Possibly she was born the Elizabeth Hays named above, the sister of Hannah (Hays) Osborn.

By deed of 14 October 1835, this John Squier Osborn and wife Sarah of Clinton Township(f) supposedly occupying there the house here considered, conveyed the same property above described to Thomas, William, and Charles Belcher of New York. By one of 2 November 1843 the said William Belcher and wife Caroline of Brooklyn, New York, and Charles Belcher and wife Caroline of Clinton Township, Essex County, New Jersey, conveyed their shares to the third grantee, Thomas Belcher of the last named place.

Thomas Belcher, last named, having by subsequent purchase extended his holdings in Irvington eastward along Clinton Avenue across Elizabeth River to Orange Avenue, devised by will of 31 August 1855 the use of his entire estate to his widow during her lifetime and afterward the same to be divided among his children. He was a member of the firm of Belcher Bros. and Company. Belchers Pond and Mill in Irvington bear his name.

Accordingly, by their deed of 20 October 1908, seven of the heirs conveyed to three others of them, Herbert B., Samuel H., and Josiah M. Baldwin of the city of Newark, a large part of the property, including the house (here considered) on a lot fronting on Clinton Avenue east of Stuyvesant Avenue (formerly Wall Street) in Irvington. These three heirs and grantees conveyed the same to the Board of Education of Irvington in the County of Essex by deed of 16 December 1919, and the "Frank H. Morrell High School" was soon after erected on the Clinton Avenue front of the tract between Elizabeth River and Stuyvesant Avenue

(f) Clinton Township created 1835 from parts of Orange and Newark Townships.

the rear part being converted into an athletic field.(g) The homestead house here surveyed was fortunately preserved by removal in toto northwest from the site of the school to one at number 506 Stuyvesant Avenue, a lot cut from the original tract.

By deed of same date above, the last named of the three grantees conveyed his one-third interest to the other two, and they by deed of 10 January 1920 conveyed to William H. Whittam of Irvington the lot on the east side of Stuyvesant Avenue to which the house had been removed as stated. Whittam passed title to William Steel and wife Catharine H. also of Irvington, and the last named, as widow and devisee, conveyed the same to Clara Frebel of Irvington by her deed of 13 January 1939.

Architectural Analysis:

Having two large chambers on either side of the central stairhall, the first floor plan of this house indicates its erection in the Post-Revolutionary period of country house design. Tradition of the preceding fashion is evident in the house having its upper story directly under the rafters of the low-eaved roof and without dormer windows, fenestration being limited to the gable end walls. More customary at the date of erection, circa 1806-1825, was the full height second story with garret above it.

This date assignment is further indicated by the detail of the mantel remaining in room number 3 as shown on drawing number 14 as well as of the baseboard, door and window trim there and in the upper story, all in the

(g) Map publ. 1928 in Robinson's Atlas of Irvington, South Orange, etc., plate number 5.

more delicate scale of the period named. Under the Greek Revival fashion of 1820-1850, the front rooms of the first floor of this house were refinished with woodwork trim of that style as the heavy scale moldings indicate. New windows replaced the original ones, and the recessed front entrance with its two-column Ionic portico was introduced at the same time, with the eaves cornices rebuilt also, all under the ownership of Thomas Belcher who came into possession of the house in 1835 as shown above.

Bibliography:

A search of title in Land and Probate records of Essex County by Cornelius McPhillips, H.A.B.S. abstractor, and as indicated in footnotes

Lewis D. Cook
Supervising Historian

Approved:

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(Jan)